

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, Congressman Jim Costa (D-Fresno) and Adam Putnam (R-Fla.) introduced legislation to modernize America's food safety network. The Safe Food Enforcement, Assessment, Standards and Targeting Act, "Safe FEAST Act," would establish new food safety requirements for domestically produced and imported food to identify and prevent potential sources of food-borne illness. For the first time, the measure grants the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) statutory power to recall contaminated food in the case of adulteration.

Costa a member of the Committee on Agriculture and Putnam, Chairman of the Republican Conference said they expect the bipartisan measure to earn support among consumers and industry groups.

"The last time our food safety laws had major reforms, President Eisenhower was in office. Much has changed since then; American consumers deserve to have confidence in their food supply and American farmers and processors are doing everything possible to produce the safest food in the world," said Costa.

"This is a bill to ensure the highest level of food safety for our nation's food supply," said Putnam. "Cases of food-borne illness present a health risk to consumers and risk consumer confidence in our food supply. The need for this legislation is clear." Nearly 25,000 cases of food-borne illness were reported in the United States during 2006, he noted

"What is lacking," said Costa, "is to have a system that ensures best management practices to strengthen the relationship between federal and state agencies to better prevent and control food safety threats at all levels of food production. I believe these are realistic and achievable steps, and will make the American consumer's food supply safer, which is the goal of this legislation."

To ensure that food products coming into the United States from international sources are safe, imported goods would have to adhere to the same safety and quality standards as set by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The Foreign Suppliers Quality Assurance Program would verify that all imported goods meet FDA safety requirements and requires food importers to complete a foreign supplier food safety plan, documenting the food safety measures and controls for FDA review.

The bill includes a Mandatory Food Risk Assessment and Preventative Controls Plan that

requires all domestic and foreign food companies selling food in U.S. to conduct a food safety risk analysis that identifies potential sources of contamination, outlines appropriate food safety controls, and requires verification that the food safety controls implemented are adequate to address the risks of food-borne contamination.

It establishes new standards for fruits and vegetables, including updating Good Agricultural Practices Guidance for safe production and issuance of regulation on safety standards, when risk and science demonstrate standards are needed. Increases coordination between, federal, state and foreign governments to ensure that standards and allows for variances to meet local growing conditions.

Finally, the Safe FEAST Act would grant FDA authority to access food safety production records during emergencies and deny importation of goods if strict food safety standards are not met and directs the agency to adopt a risk-based approach to inspections, giving greater scrutiny to facilities posing greater risk.